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Office of Transportation and Air Quality

Report Announcement

Light-Duty Automotive Technology and Fuel Economy Trends 1975 Through 2000

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's report, "Light-Duty Automotive Technology and Fuel Economy Trends 1975 Through 2000," summarizes key fuel economy and technology usage trends related to model year 1975 through 2000 light vehicles sold in the United States. The report finds that since 1988, average new light vehicle fuel economy has declined 1.9 miles per gallon (mpg)—more than seven percent. The average fuel economy for model year 2000 vehicles is 24.0 mpg, as low as it has been any year since 1980. This is primarily due to the increase in light truck market share and to the tradeoff of fuel economy for increased vehicle weight and performance.

Importance of Fuel Economy

Fuel economy is important because:

(1) it is directly related to carbon dioxide emissions, the most prevalent pollutant associated with global warming, and light vehicles emit about 20 percent of all U.S. carbon dioxide emissions;

(2) crude oil is considered to be a finite natural resource and light vehicles account for about 40 percent of all U.S. oil consumption; and

(3) it is directly related to the cost of fueling a vehicle. The fuel economy values in this report are laboratory data that are significantly higher than the real world estimates that are used on new vehicle labels and in the Fuel Economy Guide.

Report Highlights

The fuel economy values in this report are laboratory data that are significantly higher than the real world estimates used on new vehicle labels and in the Fuel Economy Guide. Light vehicles include those vehicles that EPA and the U.S. Department of Transportation DOT classify as cars or light-duty trucks (sport utility vehicles, vans, and pickup trucks with less than 8,500 pounds gross vehicle weight ratings).

There are five key findings in the report.

Fuel Economy Remains at a 20 Year Low

There has been an overall declining trend in light vehicle fuel economy since 1988. The average fuel economy for all model year 2000 light vehicles is now 24.0 mpg, the same as in 1999, and is as low as it has been at any time since 1980. This value is more than 1.9 mpg (about seven percent) lower than the peak value of 25.9 mpg achieved in 1987 and 1988. Within the light vehicle category for model year 2000, average fuel economy is 28.1 mpg for passenger cars and 20.5 mpg for light trucks.

Trucks Represent Nearly Half of New Light Vehicle Sales

Sales of light trucks (SUVs, vans and minivans, and pickup trucks) have risen steadily for over 20 years and now make up 46 percent of the U.S. light vehicle market–-more than twice their market share as recently as 1983. Within the light truck category for 2000, SUVs average 20.0 mpg, vans and minivans average 22.5 mpg, and pickup trucks average 20.1 mpg.

Fuel Economy is Being Traded for Vehicle Weight and Power

More efficient technologies continue to enter the new light vehicle fleet and are being used to increase vehicle weight and acceleration rather than fuel economy. This year's light vehicles will have about the same average fuel economy as those built in model year 1981. Based on accepted engineering relationships, however, had the new 2000 light vehicle fleet had the same average weight and performance as in 1981, it could have achieved 25 percent higher fuel economy.

Ford and General Motors are Pledging to Increase Fuel Economy

Ford Motor Company recently pledged to increase the fuel economy of its entire line of SUV sales by 25 percent by the 2005 model year. General Motors pledged to remain the truck fuel economy leader. If all manufacturers were to voluntarily increase the average fuel economy of their entire light vehicle fleets by 25 percent by 2005, average light vehicle fuel economy would increase from 24 mpg to 30 mpg.

The Honda Insight Hybrid is the Most Fuel Efficient U.S. Vehicle Since 1975

The model year 2000 Honda Insight, the first gasoline/battery hybrid vehicle ever sold in the U.S. market, is the most fuel efficient vehicle sold in the United States since 1975. The two-seater Insight has a laboratory fuel economy rating of 76.3 mpg, and Fuel Economy Guide/ fuel economy label ratings of 61 mpg city and 70 mpg highway.

For More Information

Light-Duty Automotive Technology and Fuel Economy Trends: 1975-2000 (EPA420-R-00-008) is available electronically on the Office of Transportation and Air Quality's (OTAQ) Web site at:

http://www.epa.gov/otaq/fetrends.htm

Printed copies of this report are available from:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
National Service Center for Environmental Publications
P.O. Box 42419
Cincinnati, OH 45242-2419
(800) 490-9198

You can also contact the OTAQ library for document information at:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Transportation and Air Quality Library
2000 Traverwood Drive
Ann Arbor, MI 48105
(734) 214-4311

A copy of the *Fuel Economy Guide* giving city and highway fuel economy data for individual models is available at http://www.fueleconomy.gov or by calling the U.S. Department of Energy's National Alternative Fuels Hotline at (800) 423-1363.